

each emitter end (40.2) is covered in a film of gold.

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6. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, in which the composite material has a glass content lying in the range 50% to 90% by weight relative to the total weight of the material.

7. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, in which the composite material also includes mica.

8. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, in which each needle (40) is held firmly in the sheath (42) which surrounds it without any possibility of rubbing or displacement.

9. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, in which the means for applying a voltage between two portions of the shank of each needle comprise first and second plates (44, 46) situated at two different heights along each sheath of composite material, and means (70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80) for applying a high voltage between said two plates.

13. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 11, in which the high voltage source is made using surface mount components (SMCs).

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14. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, having a plurality of needles, each needle being surrounded by a sheath, the sheaths being interconnected in pairs.

17. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, in which the apparatus is incorporated in a housing (51) made of

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plastics material.

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19. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 17, in which the plastics material has resistivity lying in the range $10^4 \Omega.m$ to $10^{12} \Omega.m$.

20. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 17, in which the inside of the housing is treated with antistatic paint.

21. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 17, in which the material constituting the housing is treated with additives implanting antistatic properties thereto.

22. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 17, in which the housing comprises two shells with screw wells (56).

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24. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1, further including regulator means (82, 94) for regulating the voltage applied between the two portions of the shank of each needle.

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27. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 24, in which the means for varying the applied voltage are automatic means or manual means.

28. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 25, including an ion detector, itself comprising:

- means (112) for sensing ions or a quantity of ions in an atmosphere;
- indicator means (114, 122) for indicating the presence of ions; and
- switch means (100-110) for switching the indicator

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means as a function of the quantity of ions sensed by the ion sensor means (112).

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37. (Amended) A method of vacuum-packaging foodstuffs, the method comprising the following steps:

- producing one or more negative oxygen ion fluxes by means of apparatus according to claim 1;
- subjecting the foodstuffs for packaging to said ion flux; and
- vacuum-packaging the foodstuffs.

38. (Amended) A method of storing foodstuffs in which the foodstuffs are placed in premises fitted with ionizer apparatus according to claim 1, and in which a flux of negative ions is produced by means of said ionizer apparatus.

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40. (Amended) A method of treating the atmosphere in premises, in which use is made of apparatus according to claim 1.

PLEASE CANCEL CLAIMS 30-36 WITHOUT PREJUDICE OR
DISCLAIMER OF THE SUBJECT MATTER THEREOF.